

# The Ecologist

CAMPAIGNS  
& UPDATES

May/June 1996

## World Bank Reviews Loans to Coal India

Under pressure from NGOs, the World Bank has agreed to scrutinize its controversial loan programme to Coal India to support the expansion of open-cast mining in east and central India. The Bank had already approved a loan of \$63 million to enhance Coal India's capacity to deal with the environmental and social impacts of its operations; the go-ahead for a second \$437 million loan for new equipment will now be conditional on environmental and social rehabilitation.

The World Bank loans are accompanied by strict economic conditions requiring India to liberalize coal imports, deregulate coal prices and open up the coal industry to the private sector. Some 200,000 coal workers will have to be laid off.

Coal India's proposed open-cast mining will displace thousands of people, a third of whom are tribals. Those who will be evicted have been offered a limited amount of cash in compensation — not land or jobs. There has been little consultation with local people: Coal India organized two workshops in Calcutta, not the project area, and excluded representative organizations. This failure to consult violates Bank policies which require "the informed participation of indigenous people" in projects that affect indigenous communities.

A study by Minewatch, the UK-based NGO, has documented severe weaknesses in the environmental management plans for the 25 proposed open-cast mines.

The World Bank is also considering a number of related loans to India's power sector. Plans by the state government of Orissa to privatize its power sector are being backed by a Bank loan of \$350 million and \$150 million from the International Finance Corporation, the Bank's private sector arm. Other finance for the \$2.6 billion programme will come from the Asian Development Bank, Britain's Overseas Development Administration and private investors.

The Bank describes Orissa's privatization as "a highly-relevant model for state power sector reform in India" However, many fear that privatization will greatly exacerbate existing social inequalities and bring massive environmental degradation through the expansion of coal mining and the building of new coal-fired capacity.

Large areas of Orissa are already severely degraded as a result of coal mining and coal burning. The Nandira river has been turned into "an industrial drain" as a result of the dumping of ash from the Talcher Thermal Power Plant. This has also contaminated groundwaters, depriving villagers of safe drinking water.

## Tehri Dam Fast and Evictions

Sunderlal Bahuguna, the veteran Indian activist, has been undertaking a prayerful fast at the site of the half-constructed Tehri Dam in India since 13 April in protest at the Indian government's failure to undertake a full independent review of the project, as promised.

The Tehri dam is the first of a planned series of dams on the Bhagirathi and Bhilangana, the major rivers that feed the Ganges. It is being built in a major earthquake area and will require the resettle-

ment of 70,000 people. The inhabitants of Tehri town are due to be forcibly resettled on 20 June because the local government claims that the town will be submerged. Local activists say this is not the case and that the government is pushing through the evictions to pre-empt legal moves to block dam construction.

**WRITE TO:** Sh. Shankar Dayal Sharma, President of India, Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, INDIA. Fax:

The Prime Minister of India, Raisina Road, New Delhi, INDIA. Fax: 91 11 301 6857

Few local people are employed in the mines and power plants. Many thousands, however, have seen their livelihoods undermined by the coal industry. According to one local NGO, the District Action Group of Talcher-Angul, "The loss of natural resources, loss of occupation for thousands of fishers and farmers, the miseries due to health hazards and displacement far outweighs the development that coal fired power has ushered in."

**CONTACT:** Minewatch, Methodist Clubland, 54 Camberwell Rd, London SE5 0EN. Tel: 0171-277 4852; Fax: 0171-277 4853; Chotanagpur Adivasi Sewa Simiti, c/o Prerana Resource Centre, 1/561 Suresh Colony Mor, PO box 19, Hazaribag, Bihar 825301, INDIA. Fax: +91-6546 233 16. A report, *The Coal-Fired Industrial Colonization of India's State of Orissa*, is available from Institute for Policy Studies, 5th floor, 1601 Connecticut Av, NW, Washington, DC 20009, USA. Fax +1 (202) 387 7915

**INSIDE** ●●●●●●●●●●

**CHERNOBYL 10 YEARS ON**

**TOXIC WASTE IN CEMENT KILNS**

**SHRIMP TRIBUNAL**

**OIL PROTESTS**

**THAI FARMERS' PROTEST**

**RTZ UPDATE**

**CHEMICAL SAFETY**

**The Ecologist**

CAMPAIGNS & UPDATES

Send news, campaigns and updates for inclusion in Campaigns & Updates to: The Ecologist (Campaigns), Agriculture House, Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1DU, UK. E-mail: ecologist@gn.apc.org, Fax: +44-(0)1258 473748.

No copyright on campaigns.

## Calls for Chernobyl to be Shut Down

Ten years after the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine on 26 April 1986, hundreds of scientists, activists and the Permanent Peoples's Tribunal are demanding that the reactor be shut down immediately and an alternative energy strategy drawn up for Eastern Europe based on renewable energy sources.

The Tribunal condemned the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) "for trying to promote nuclear energy through falsehood, intimidation and unethical use of money" and "for their attempts to suppress all forms of alternative renewable and sustainable sources of energy".

Official health information indicates that at least nine million people were directly affected by the explosion, but the IAEA claims that it caused the deaths of only 32 people.

Campaigners also oppose Belorussian plans to lower the maximum allowable limits for contamination of land and food and to promote the resettlement and agricultural development of land north of Chernobyl. This land is so radioactive that scientists believe it should not be inhabited for at least several centuries.

At a demonstration in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, held to demand that Chernobyl and other nuclear power plants in the republic be shut down, anti-nuclear protesters were attacked by the police; 19

of them were arrested and held for several days. Said Vladimir Sliviak of the Socio-Ecological Union, "The authorities tried to break our plans for 26 April Chernobyl 10-anniversary day, but they can't kill worldwide the anti-nuke movement as they can't kill the memory of Chernobyl".

**CONTACT:** "Ten lessons from Chernobyl", conclusions of conference organized by "No More Chernobyls!" campaign, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Brückenstrasse 5-11, 50667 Köln, GERMANY. E-mail <press@lessons.kiev.ua>; Permanent Peoples's Tribunal, session on "Chernobyl: Environmental, Health and Human Rights Implications", Via Dogana Vecchia 5, I-00100 Rome, ITALY. Fax: +39-6-68-7777-4; x-USSR Antinuclear Campaign, SEU/CCI, PO Box 211, 121019 Moscow, RUSSIA. E-mail <ecodefense@glas.apc.org>

• **The building of new nuclear power plants in the West has ground to a halt in recent years (except in France), partly as a result of the Chernobyl accident. The nuclear industry is therefore attempting to export its technologies to Eastern Europe and to Asia, supported by loans from international banks and government credit agencies.**

In 1978, the Czechoslovak government decided to build four Soviet reactors near the village of Mochovce. Construction started in 1984 but stopped in 1991. Slovakia has since tried to obtain Western finance and technology to finish the plant.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and several West

European companies (Électricité de France, Bayernwerke AG, PreuSen Elektra) considered involvement on condition that the unsafe reactors were phased out and that the plant conformed to international nuclear safety standards. They decided not to participate because they did not believe these conditions would be met.

On 16 April 1996, contracts were signed between the Slovak government and EUCOM, a consortium comprising the French company, Framatome, and the German company, Siemens, to install safety equipment on the Soviet reactors but not to US or European Union standards.

Director of Siemens, Heinrich von Pierer, has said that Mochovce is the "reference project" for 60 similar reactors in Eastern Europe. Siemens and its subsidiaries were involved in building most of the nuclear power plants in Western Germany where construction has stopped since Chernobyl. The Slovak group, For Mother Earth, is calling for a boycott of Siemens products until it pulls out of Mochovce.

**WRITE**, requesting that Siemens cease its participation in the Mochovce nuclear power plant in Slovakia, to: Dr Heinrich von Pierer, Siemens, Vittelbacherpl. 2, 80333 München, GERMANY. E-mail: <roland.huegel@mchw.siemens.de> Fax: +49-89-234 4242.

**CONTACT:** For Mother Earth, Slovakia. E-mail <samatkuzem@spes.sanet.sk>

## Toxic Waste Spill at Cement Kiln, Disposal in Animal Feed

An estimated 10 tonnes of Cemfuel®, a solvent-based waste mix, was spilled at Castle Cement's cement works in Lancashire's Ribbles Valley on 29 March, flooding the area to a depth of nearly one metre (See *The Ecologist*, Nov/Dec 1995).

One spark could have engulfed the works in flames and contaminated the entire town with by-products of low-temperature waste including dioxins and phenols. The company used its own fleet of tankers to pump out the spill and appears not to have informed the Health and Safety Executive or the Environment Agency of the spillage, even though it is

legally obliged to. Instead, local residents reported to these bodies that strong vapours were coming from the works.

Meanwhile, the Environment Agency will recommend this summer in its "integrated pollution control" guidance notes that calcium oxide dust collected from cement kiln chimneys be incorporated into animal feeds as a source of calcium and as a binding agent. The guidance notes themselves acknowledge that "this dust tends to concentrate trace impurities in fuel and raw materials such as certain volatile metals and dioxins. Calcium oxide is a prescribed substance and its release to land should be prevented or minimized".

• **Groups in India working on waste-related issues have launched an information clearinghouse, "Toxics Link", to collect and share information about toxic substances and alternatives.**

The launch coincided with the visit of waste incineration experts Paul and Ellen Connett who met policymakers, town planners and medical staff in the major cities of India and Bangladesh. Incineration is increasingly being promoted by Western companies in India; hospital waste is the most likely incineration target.

**CONTACT:** Toxics Link, 79 Carter Road, Bandra 400 050, INDIA. Fax: +91-22 6438581; E-mail <admin@chs.ilbom.ernet.in>

## “Shrimp Tribunal” Condemns Aquaculture

The Ecuadorian government accused Ecuadorian activist Gina Chavez of Acción Ecológica of “treason” and “slander” after she spoke against intensive prawn farming at an international meeting in April. Similar accusations have been levelled against Honduran activist Lorenzo Cardinal by the Honduran state aquaculture agency.

Both activists were witnesses at the NGO-organized “Shrimp Tribunal” held in New York to coincide with the 4th Session of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and had presented evidence on the destructive ecological and social impacts of prawn farming in their countries.

Prawn farms have been responsible for the loss of approximately half of Ecuador’s mangroves in the last 20 years, displacing local people and causing widespread pollution. The prawns are largely exported to markets in the North. Acción Ecológica and other Ecuadorian environmental groups have called on Northern consumers to boycott prawns from Ecuador.

In a statement presented to the CSD, over 30 NGOs from South-East Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America attending the New York meeting called on governments to “ensure that artisanal fisheries and dependant coastal communities, and their access to community resources, are not adversely affected by aquaculture development or operations”.

The statement urges governments to prohibit ecologically and socially destructive methods of aquaculture, including

the use of exotic fish and genetically-modified organisms; feeds containing fish which could be eaten directly by people; and surface and groundwaters which are used for human consumption or agriculture.

The NGOs also demanded a ban on “the wholesale conversion of agricultural or cultivable land to aquaculture use” and that steps be taken to rehabilitate ecologically degraded lands.

**CONTACT:** Mangrove Action Project, 4649 Sunnyside Ave, 321, Seattle, WA 98103, USA. Tel/Fax: +1 (206) 545 1137. E-mail: <mangrove@igc.apc.org>

**FOR COPIES** of the NGO statement, contact: Matthew Gianni, Greenpeace Fisheries Campaign, 568 Howard Street, 3rd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, USA. Tel: +1 (415) 512 9025. Fax: +1 (415) 512 8699. E-mail: <mgianni@igc.apc.org>

- **Christian Aid is urging UK consumers to write to supermarkets which sell tiger prawns to express concern over the damaging human and environmental costs of commercial prawn farming in the South. The group has published a report — *After the Prawn Rush* — which documents the impacts of aquaculture.**

COPIES available (£3.50) from Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT.

**WRITE TO:** Eric Edwards, Director, Shellfish Association, Fishmongers Hall, London Bridge, London EC4R 9EL.

Archie Norman, Chief Executive, Asda, Asda House, South Bank, Great Wilson Street, Leeds LS11 5AD

Colin Smith, Chief Executive, Safeway, 6 Millington Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 4AY

David Sainsbury, Chair and Chief Executive, Sainsbury, Stamford House, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LL

Ian Maclaurin, Chair and Chief Executive, Tesco, Tesco House, PO Box 18, Delamare Road, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, Herts EN8 9SL.

## Thai Farmers Sit In Protest for a Month

Up to 13,000 protesters, most of them farmers, sat outside Government House in Bangkok, Thailand, for most of April, the hottest time of the year, in insanitary conditions until the Prime Minister promised to deal with their complaints.

The gathering, which the various protest groups termed the Forum of the Poor, began when villagers from many north-eastern provinces came to the capital to air their long-standing grievances about forest and land issues, particularly relating to dam projects and eucalyptus plantations, with Prime Minister Banharn Silapa-archa.

They were joined by Bangkok slum dwellers who have lost their homes as land has been developed, workers who have fallen sick because of poor working conditions or who have been laid-off, and villagers opposed to a toxic waste dump on their land.

The Cabinet finally enacted several resolutions to address the problems on a case-by-case basis. These included granting land titles; cancelling eucalyptus projects and granting villagers permission to remove existing plantations; and paying compensation to those affected by dam construction.

## Oil Explorations

The U’wa people of North-East Colombia have threatened to commit collective suicide if the Los Angeles-based Occidental Oil Company goes ahead with plans to explore for petroleum on U’wa land.

In February, Occidental Petroleum Colombia Inc, a subsidiary of the US multinational, obtained a licence from the Colombian Ministry of the Environment to explore land near the Colombian-Venezuelan border. Twenty-five per cent of the concession lies in the U’wa’s legally-recognized territory.

The U’wa have appealed to Colombia’s Constitutional Court, arguing that the decision to grant the exploration licence to Occidental violates the special rights guaranteed to indigenous peoples under the Colombian constitution because they were not properly informed of the company’s plans or consulted on them.

The U’wa also charge that they were tricked into signing a document which the company claims gives their assent to the exploration. The U’wa have requested that a Commission be established to “evaluate the grave repercussions of petroleum exploration and exploitation” and have urged the company to leave them in peace.

They have appealed to the international community to join them in pressurizing Occidental to withdraw. “The mosquito comes, bites us, sucks our blood and kills us with malaria. Occidental will do the same: come, suck the petroleum out of the earth and finish with our lives.”

**WRITE TO:** President Samper, President of Colombia, Casa de Nario, Cra.8a, No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA. Fax: +57 1 286 7434

Dr. Guimer Dominguez, Occidental de Colombia Inc, Calle 77A, No.11-32, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA. Fax: +57 1 211 6820

Dr. Ray R. Irani, Chair, Occidental Petroleum, 10889 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024, USA. Fax: +1 (310) 443 6690

- **Activists from Cardigan Bay in Wales organized a telephone blockade on 26 April of Chevron UK which intends to start drilling for oil in the Bay this autumn.**

The British government granted Chevron a licence to drill even though an Environmental Impact Assessment, required under EC law, has not been carried out.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** contact Cardigan Bay Earth First! Box E, Oakridge, Taleisin, Machynlleth, Powys, WALES. E-mail: <rck3@aber.ac.uk>

## Activists Protest at RTZ's AGM

Activists from several groups disrupted the annual general meeting of Rio Tinto Zinc, the British mining conglomerate, in protest at the environmental and social impacts of the company's operations (*The Ecologist*, March/April 1996).

Members of the World Development Movement (WDM), Survival International and Partizans homed-in on Grasberg, one of the world's largest copper-gold mines in the highlands of Irian Jaya, Indonesia. A week before the meeting, WDM drove a 13-tonne digger to the company's London headquarters to deliver a letter calling on RTZ to withdraw from the mine.

Friends of the Earth, meanwhile, is opposing RTZ's proposal to extract mineral sands from Madagascar. If the extraction goes ahead, at least two-thirds of the forest along the south-eastern coast of Madagascar could be destroyed, hastening the extinction of many endemic species of animals and plants. The project would also threaten the livelihoods of local fishers.

RTZ says that it has not made a final decision on the proposed project, which is expected to last 40 years, although they are currently negotiating further impact studies with the Malagasy government. Several large institutional investors have raised their concerns as a result of pressure from Friends of the Earth and others.

**CONTACT:** WDM's report, *Rhetoric Not Reality — A Profile of British Mining Company RTZ*, compares the company's stated social and environmental policies with its record. WDM, 25 Beehive Place, London SW9 7QR. Tel: 0171-737 6215; Fax: 0171-274 8232; Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ. Tel: 0171 490 1555. Fax: 0171 490 0881. E-mail: <info@foe.co.uk>

## Chemical Safety Questioned

Some 60 top scientists signed an open letter to the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) in April, expressing their concern at the "improper" and "excessive" influence of business interests on the group.

The scientists claim that IPCS has deviated from accepted procedures for scientific objectivity by giving representatives of affected industries key roles in writing IPCS publications; by excluding leading independent experts because of business opposition; and by sending full-time employees of chemical corporations to discussions as NGO representatives.

- At the end of May, activists occupied land owned by opencast mining giant Celtic Energy in a national "Reclaim the Valleys" week (*CAMPAIGNS* Jan/Feb; July/Aug 1995)

Celtic Energy is awaiting planning permission to mine many of the valleys of South Wales. Protesters set up camps last summer at Selar and Brynhenllys near Swansea; the sites were recently evicted at considerable cost. A new camp is being set up at Nant Gyrlais where local people are opposing the company's plans.

- Redland Aggregates is still awaiting the results of Scotland's longest-ever planning inquiry into the company's planning application for a superquarry on the site of a National Scenic Area on the Isle of Harris.

A coalition of 21 environmental groups against the quarry have published a booklet, *The Case Against the Harris Superquarry*, which highlights the effects on the local economy and community.

Another report from the Council for the Protection of Rural England, *Rocks and Hard Places*, points out that construction companies have turned their attention to the remotest parts of the British Isles for their raw materials because of growing and vociferous opposition to mineral extraction in more densely-populated areas of the British countryside.

*The Case Against the Harris Superquarry*, £4.75, cheques payable to SWCL, Superquarry Campaign, PO Box 64, Perth PH2 0TF. For further information, contact Friends of the Earth Scotland, Tel: 0131-554 9977; *Rocks and Hard Places*, £6, CPRE, 25 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PP.

"With the proliferation of free trade agreements, IPCS may play an unprecedented, international role in risk assessment and toxic substances regulation. Misleadingly mild assessments of chemical hazards by IPCS can result in the spread of disease instead of its prevention around the world . . . IPCS has demonstrated extreme bias in favour of the chemical and asbestos industries in its evaluations of environmental health hazards to the public."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact MCS Referral & Resources, 2326 Pickwick Rd, Baltimore MD 21207-6631, USA. E-mail: <adonnay@mail.bcpl.lib.md.us>

## IN BRIEF ●●●●●●●●●●

### FOOD MILES

The SAFE Alliance's action pack on how to reduce Food Miles — the distance that food travels before it is consumed — looks at ways to get supermarkets to stock local foods; how local authorities can address Food Miles; and how local food links and farmers' markets can be set up in urban and rural areas.

*Food Miles Action Pack: a guide to thinking globally and eating locally*, £5, SAFE Alliance, 38 Ebury St. London SW1W 0LU, UK. Tel: 0171-823 5660.

### AUSTRALIAN PARKS

The state government of Western Australia is deregistering sections of national parks to allow sand mining. Some 368 hectares of dune and woodland will be taken from D'Entrecasteaux National Park on the South-West coast, a removal which will also affect Lake Jasper, the largest freshwater lake in the state.

WRITE TO: Hon Richard Court, State Premier, 24th Floor, 197 St George Tce, Perth 6000, AUSTRALIA. Fax: +61-9-322 1213.

CONTACT: D'Entrecasteaux Coalition, PO Box 142, Denmark, AUSTRALIA 6333. Fax: +61-98 48248

### NO GOLF DAY

On 29 April 1996, No Golf Day, anti-golf course activists at Tepoztlan, Mexico honoured one of their colleagues at the site of a planned golf course inside a national park. Marcos Olmedos had been shot dead on 10 April when police opened fire on busloads of protesters on their way to the Mexican President to object to the golf course. The companies, Grupo KS and GTE Data Services, have since cancelled the golf development.

### SEA EMPRESS

A report by Friends of the Earth, *Lost Treasure: The Long-Term Environmental Impacts of the Sea Empress Oil Spill*, indicates that damage to wildlife and habitats on the Welsh coast will continue for decades to come. FoE, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ. £7.95

### SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS

Thirteen US activists, including a nun and priests, who had protested against the military training school, School of the Americas, were gaoled in April for two to six months.

CONTACT: SOA Watch, PO Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903, USA.